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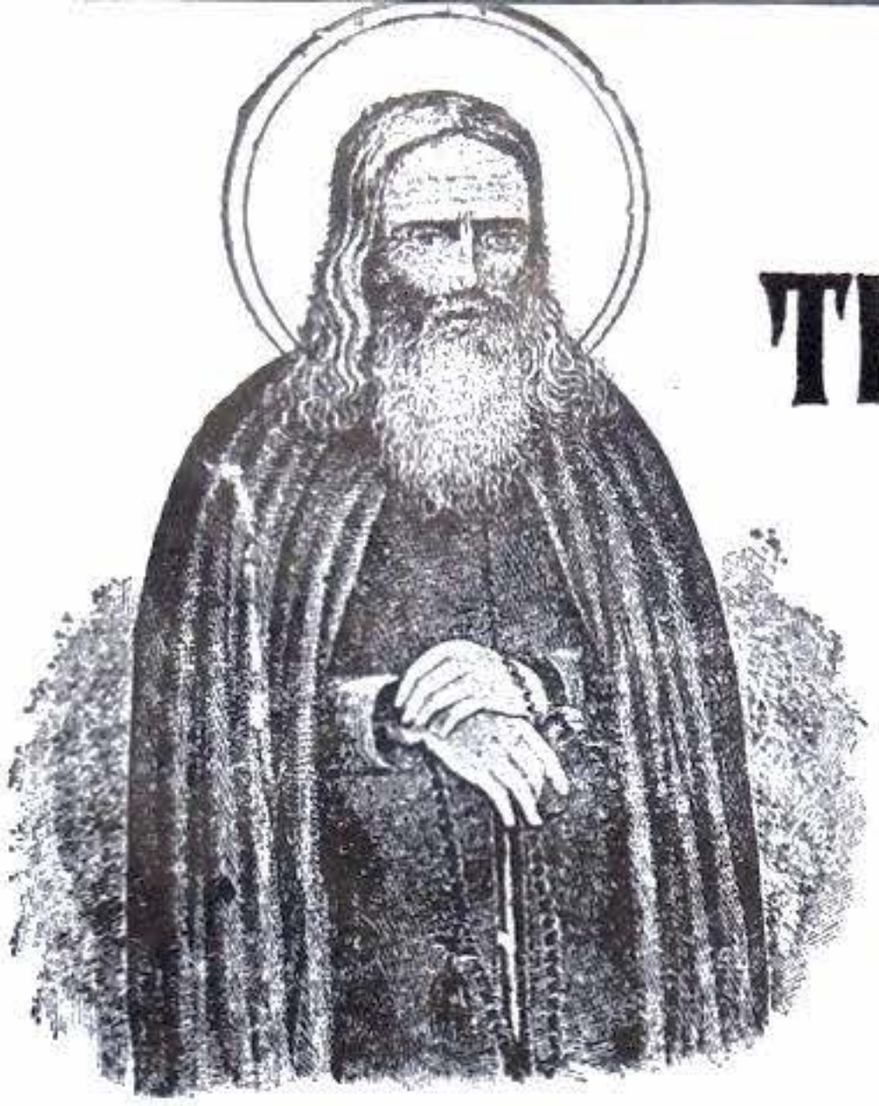

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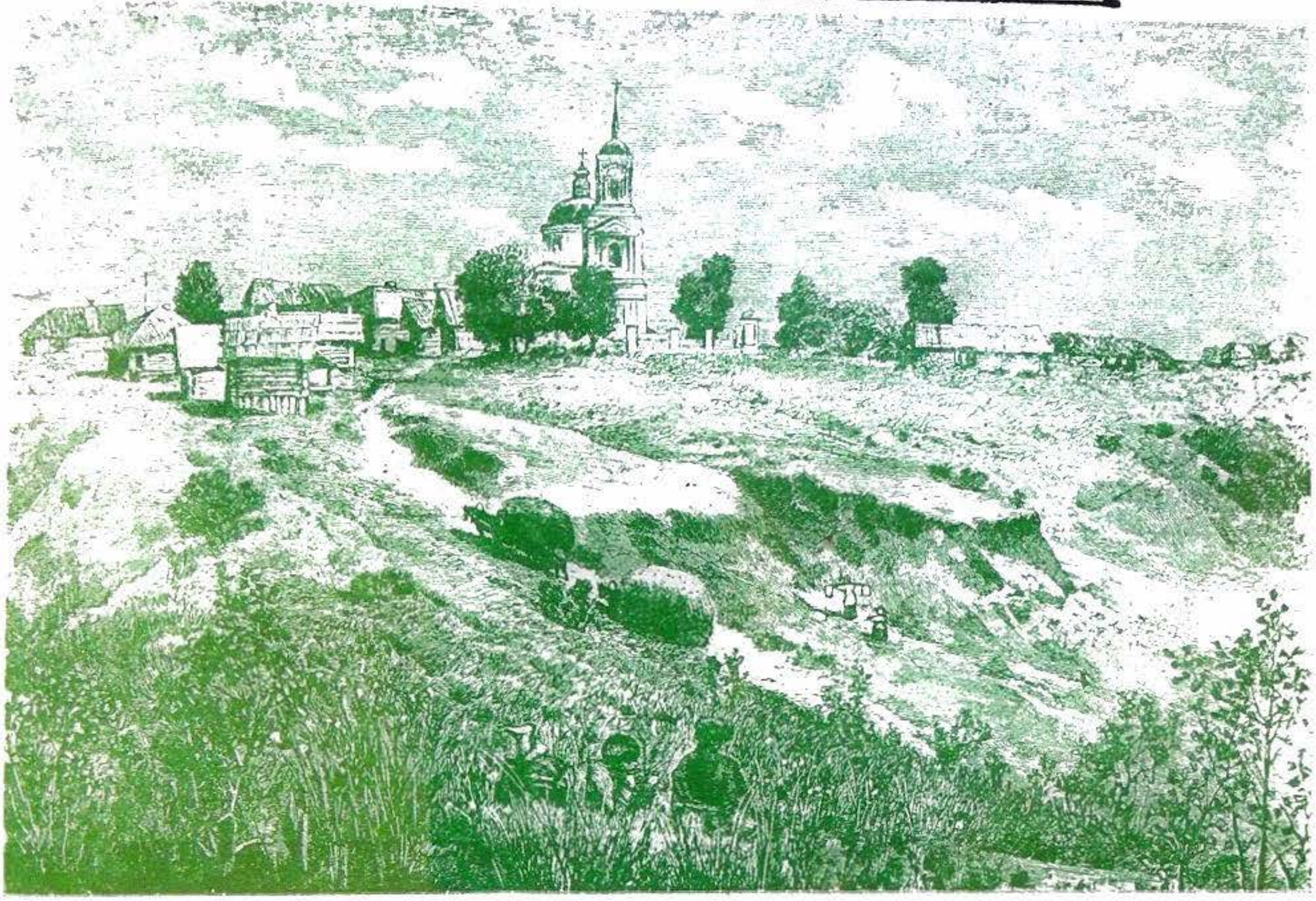


RADONEZH, THE PLACE OF ST. SERGIUS' BOYHOOD

Childhood in Christ

THE FRAGRANCE of true Orthodox piety is most thoroughly absorbed in the formative years of childhood, before the soul has become hardened in a wrong understanding of life, or become involved in the atmosphere of fakery and lying so characteristic of the present-day world on both sides of the Iron Curtain. Nothing is so essential to the gaining and keeping of this fragrance than *truthfulness*, for God is Truth and satan is the father of lies. Lying, dishonesty, deception — disfigure and wound a child and cause him to lose this fragrance.

A child who is taught the habit of truthfulness can preserve the precious fragrance of Orthodoxy for his whole life and bring forth abundant spiritual fruits unto eternal salvation.

The Early Life of St. Sergius of Radonezh

THE HOLY ABBA OF THE NORTHERN THEBAID*

OUR HOLY FATHER SERGIUS was born in the year 1314 in the city of Rostov, of noble, devout, and righteous parents named Cyril and Mary, who for their holy lives were venerated locally as Saints after their death. The child was baptized with the name Bartholomew and was the second of three brothers, the eldest being Stephen and the youngest Peter. All were raised in strict piety and purity.

Stephen and Peter quickly learned to read and write, but Bartholomew did not learn so easily; he could not put his mind to his studies nor keep pace with his companions. The boy often prayed to God in secret and with many tears: "O Lord, give me understanding of learning. Teach me, O Lord, and enlighten me."

The great Saint received learning not from men, but from God. One day his father sent him to find some lost horses. On his way he met a strange monk, a holy elder, a priest by rank, of a holy, Angel-like appearance, who was standing beneath an oak tree, praying devoutly with many tears. The boy bowed down humbly before him and awaited the end of his prayers. His prayer finished, the elder glanced at the boy and, foreseeing with his inward eyes that he would be a chosen vessel of the Holy Spirit, he called him to his side, blessed him, bestowed on him a kiss in the name of the Lord, and asked: "What are you seeking, child?" The boy answered: "My soul desires above all things to understand reading and writing, and I am sorely grieved that I understand nothing of what I am taught. Will you, holy father, pray to God for me, that He will give me understanding of book learning?" The monk raised his hands and eyes toward heaven, sighed, prayed to God, and said, "Amen." Then, taking from his sachel as it were some treasure, with three fingers he handed the boy what appeared to be a little bit of antidoron or prosphora, saying, "Take this in your mouth, child, and eat; this is given you as a sign

* Condensed from the Life of the Saint's Disciple, Epiphanius the Wise.

The Childhood of St. Sergius

An Angel appears to the holy child Bartholomew, giving him the gift of book learning

The holy parents of St. Sergius bring the infant to church

While still in the world, young St. Sergius prays in his room, preserving his purity before God

The earliest known icon of the Saint

SAINT SERGIUS OF RADONEZH

Troparion, Tone 4

ATHLETE OF VIRTUES,* a true warrior of Christ God,* thou didst struggle mightily against the passions in this temporal life.* In psalmody, vigils, and fasting thou wert an example to thy disciples.* Thereby the Holy Spirit did abide in thee,* and with His activity thou wast radiantly adorned.* Since thou hast boldness before the Holy Trinity,* remember thy flock whom thou hast wisely gathered.* And do not forget, as thou hast promised,* to visit thy children,* O Sergius, our holy Father.

of God's grace and for the understanding of Holy Scriptures. Though the gift appears but small, the taste thereof is very sweet."

The boy ate, tasting a sweetness as of honey, and said: "Is it not of this that it is written, *How sweet are Thy Words to my palate, more than honey to my lips,* and *My soul doth cherish them exceedingly?*" (Ps. 118:103, 167.) The monk answered, "You believe, my child, and therefore you will see even more than this; from this time forth the Lord will give you learning above that of your brothers and others your own age." Then he instructed him for the profit of his soul. The boy stood, receiving like some fertile soil the fruitful seed, rejoicing in heart and soul that he had been vouchsafed to find such a holy elder.

At the boy's tearful request the monk accompanied him to his parents' house, where Cyril and Mary came out to meet him and bowed low before him. The monk blessed them, and they offered him food, but he went first into their chapel, taking with him the child sanctified from his mother's womb, and began to recite the Hours, telling the boy to read the appointed Psalms. The boy said, "Father, I do not know how." And the elder said to him, "I told you that the Lord would grant you understanding of learning; speak the word of God without doubt!" Then the boy entered a state as it were of astonishment, and having received the elder's blessing, began to recite the Psalms very well and in an excellent rhythm, and from that hour he could read. His parents and brothers were astonished, and glorified God.

All returned to the house, where the monk ate, bestowed a blessing on the parents, and calmed their fears. For, as they informed him, their son, while yet in his mother's womb, had three times uttered a cry in church during the Divine Liturgy. "O blessed pair!" he exclaimed. "Why do you fear where there is no place for fear? Rather rejoice that you have given birth to such a child. Here is a proof that my words are true: when I leave, you will see that the child will know how to read and write superbly and will understand all the holy books. The boy will be great before God and man, and will direct others thanks to his virtuous life." He further pronounced that their son would be a dwelling of the Holy Trinity and would lead many to an understanding of the Divine commandments.

They accompanied him to the doorway, where suddenly he became invisible. Perplexed, they wondered if he had been an Angel sent to give the boy knowledge of reading. After this the boy could read and immediately understand any book, was submissive to his parents, attended church services daily, studied holy writings, and constantly disciplined his body and preserved himself in purity of body and soul. Even before the age of 12, his fasting was so severe that his mother tried to persuade him to abandon it and eat like

everyone else. But the boy answered with the wisdom of an elder: "Should I not strive toward God with all the strength I have, so that He might deliver me from my sins?" And so he continued his fasting, and God helped him in his good intent.

At this time Cyril moved with his family from Rostov, where there was then much civil strife, to Radonezh, where he settled near the church of the Nativity of Christ. Two of his sons, Stephen and Peter, married, but Bartholomew, who was leading a life of prayer, fasting, and lamentation, was desirous of becoming a monk. His parents counseled him to wait and to look after them, because they were old and had become poor and sick, and they had no one else to turn to. Bartholomew gladly cared for them until both of them entered the monastic life. They lived but a few years thereafter.

Having buried his parents and prayed for them for forty days at the Divine Liturgy and at memorial services, Bartholomew began to make preparations for abandoning the world. He gave his share of his father's inheritance to his younger brother Peter, keeping nothing for himself. Stephen's wife soon died also, leaving two sons, and Stephen renounced the world and became a monk in the Monastery of the Protection of the Most Holy Mother of God in Khotkov. Bartholomew went to him there and asked him to accompany him in the search for some desert place. Together they explored many forested places, until finally they found a clearing in the middle of a dense forest, near water. Liking the place, they prayed and then set to chopping wood.

First they built themseles a hut, then a cell and a small church. Bartholomew asked his brother, whom he now had as father in the Lord, to which feast the church should be dedicated. Stephen reminded him of the signs that had been given him even in his mother's womb, that he would be a disciple of the Holy Trinity and would lead many others to believe in the Holy Trinity. And so they agreed that the church should be dedicated to the Holy Trinity. Then they asked the blessing of the ruling prelate, and a priest was sent by Theognostes, Metropolitan of Kiev and All Russia, to consecrate the church.

Stephen did not long remain in the wilderness with his brother. He began to find the hardships too great to endure. On all sides was nothing but forest and wasteland. There were no roads or paths, no villages or houses, no means of providing food and drink, and no one came to them or brought them anything. Stephen could not endure all this and left his brother and went to Moscow. There, in the Monastery of the Epiphany, he labored fervently in virtues and ascetic practices. In the same Monastery at this time was Alexis, the future Metropolitan and Saint. Stephen lived in spiritual communion with him, and sang together with him on the cliros. The Grandduke Simeon came

St. Sergius living alone in the forest, feeding a huge bear.

to hear of Stephen and his godly life and had him ordained priest and later abbot of the Monastery, appointing him also as his own confessor.

In the meantime, the blessed youth Bartholomew remained faithful to his calling and continued to live in the wilderness alone. He had not yet taken the monastic vows, for he had not yet become sufficiently accustomed to the monastic works and rules and all else that is required of a monk. He was tonsured only later, when he was 23 years old.

Who can express the holy youth's labors and struggles in his desert solitude? Who can understand his fervent desire, his warmth of love for God, his sighs and tears and constant prayer? Who can know the fearlessness of soul he must have had to withstand all the snares of the enemy? Many wild beasts also visited him, not only by night but also by day; there were bears, and howling wolves. At first he was afraid, being human, but then he turned to prayer, and by God's mercy the beasts departed.

One bear in particular would come to the Saint. Seeing that the animal came only to get some food, the Saint would place a small slice of bread on a log, and so the bear learned to come for the meal thus prepared for him. At this time the Saint had no variety of foods, only bread and water from the spring, and a great scarcity of these. Often there was no bread, and both he and the bear would go hungry. Sometimes the Saint would give his only slice to the bear, being unwilling to disappoint him.

Let no one be astonished at this, knowing certainly that when the Holy Spirit dwells in a man, the creatures become submissive to him, just as to first-created Adam in the beginning, before the transgression of the commandment, when he likewise lived alone in a wilderness, and everything was subject to him.

The Holy Fathers of Orthodox Spirituality:

The monastic Holy Fathers, from a fresco in the Holy Trinity Monastery refectory, Jordanville, N.Y. From left to right: Sts. Athanasius of Mt. Athos, Simeon the Myrrh-gusher of Serbia, Theodore the Studite, Onuphrius the Great, Macarius the Great, John of Ryla, and John Cassian.

SAINT MACARIUS THE GREAT ("the Egyptian") was a disciple of St. Anthony the Great; his relation to him was that of disciple to elder. In his works are often to be encountered ideas which are found also in the works of St. Anthony. One may suppose that he noted down or remembered much that he heard from his Abba.

Just as St. John the Theologian, soaring in his old age to unattainable spiritual heights, could thereby reproduce in letters the spiritual teaching of Christ the Saviour, so also St. Macarius, having attained the same measure as St. Anthony, not only mastered the depths of his teaching, but also, as a seer of mysteries himself, transmitted his own visions.

His teaching is the record of a dweller of heaven, a heavenly man. To him, one who had attained the highest perfection, the spiritual world and its laws were revealed. He likewise beheld the soul and saw everything that takes

The Teaching of ST. MACARIUS THE GREAT

by I. M. Kontzevitch

place in it. He indicates to it the path to perfection. He is entirely in the vision of God and rapture. The great mysteries of the world above are revealed to him. His works speak to us, for the most part, of deification. He unfolds the philosophy of communion with God, even though he establishes no philosophical system. "The Greek philosophers teach the mastery of words," he writes; "but there are other philosophers, unlearned in words, who rejoice and take enjoyment in the Grace of God." The authentic philosophy is ascetic struggle, the acquirement of the Spirit.

Palladius says of St. Macarius (*Lausiac History,* ch. 17) that he lived precisely as a stranger on this earth, being dead to the world and earthly concerns, entirely caught up in vision and in conversation with God.

Because the *Spiritual Homilies* of St. Macarius are a description of spiritual conditions based on *personal experience,* their language is clear and expressive and attains a remarkable imagery and power. In them can be felt a profound knowledge of Scripture, and always it is its deepest spiritual meaning that is revealed.

THE *SPIRITUAL HOMILIES*

I. The Original Condition of Man

NEARNESS TO GOD. There is no *nearness* and *kinship* equal to that of the soul with God, and God with souls. He placed in the soul understanding, will, a sovereign mind. And he enthroned in the soul yet another great refinement, and made it easily moved, light-winged, indefatigable, granting it to come and go in a single instant and in thought to serve Him, when the Spirit wishes. In a word, He created it so that it might become a bride and companion of Him, as has been said: *He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit* with the Lord (I Cor. 6:17).

SOVEREIGNTY. GLORY AND AUTHORITY. Therefore, "man is more precious than all other creatures—I even dare to say, not only those visible, but also those invisible, that is, the ministering spirits. For it was not of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel that God said: *Let us create in Our image, after Our likeness* (Gen. 1:26), but He said this of the mental essence of man, I mean the immortal soul."

The mind was originally pure, remaining in its own rank, and it beheld its Master; and Adam, remaining in purity, reigned over his thoughts and was in a blessed condition, being covered with Divine glory. Thus, in Paradise Adam was illuminated by the glory which was from the beginning, like the face of Moses. The image of Moses with the veil is an image dear to Saint Macarius.

Adam was chiefly endowed with *authority,* including authority over the elements and over beasts. Having deceived Adam, "the enemy deprived him of authority and proclaimed himself prince of this world; whereas from the beginning, by God's decree, the prince of this world and master of visible things was *man*: for fire did not vanquish him, nor did water drown him, nor beasts harm him, nor poison act upon him."

FREEDOM OF WILL. Besides authority, another special, great gift to man was *freedom.* This freedom of choice, freedom of will, "authority over oneself" (*autokousia*) was given to man and is an inalienable characteristic of him. Grace only inspires, but it does not compel. Just like sin itself, it can never definitively extinguish freedom.

"The visible creation is bound by a kind of unmovable nature"; it has no will and cannot leave its own condition. "But you were created in the image and likeness of God, because, just as God is free and does what He wills, so are you free. If you should wish to perish, your nature is easily bent to this. If you wish to spew out blasphemy, make poison, or kill someone, no one opposes you or forbids you."

II. Man's Condition after the Transgression. The Struggle for Salvation.

THE POWER OF DARKNESS. The authentic life of man is only in God. Having fallen away from God in the transgression, man began to live a false life, a "life of death." The serpent becomes a kind of "second soul" to the soul, defiling it "by a sinful word," pouring into the soul a certain dark, hidden *power of darkness,* and enveloping and muffling it with a "porphyry of darkness," a purple of obscurity. The "satanic darkness" is not merely a symbol or comparison, an image or metaphor; it is just as real as the Divine light, and it is a certain *material* covering, obscurity, fog. Evil, penetrating into the soul through the heart, flows there like water in a pipe, penetrating the whole human nature.

Having taken possession of the soul, satan lays it waste and puts his *seal* upon it; and finally he is *enthroned* in the *mind,* the *heart,* and the *body.* Such a condition is possession, woundedness.

THE PLEDGE OF SALVATION IN FREEDOM. Despite this, however, human nature is not converted into something evil. Evil is not mixed in with the soul, but remains external and foreign to it, and a man is not utterly deprived of his freedom.

Thus, *freedom was not lost* after the transgression: "The freedom which God gave man in the beginning remains in him." Even though evil acts in us with all power and palpableness, instilling every impure desire, still it is joined to us, not as some say, like the mixture of wine with water, but as the wheat and tares grow each by itself in the same field, or as the thief and the master of the house are separate in the same house." "Thus has sin become admixed to the soul; but both sin and the soul retain their own nature." Hence the possibility of *rebirth,* no matter how far a man may have fallen. But by its own powers alone the soul cannot be delivered from the power of the devil and death.

THE DISPENSATION OF GOD. It was for this that Christ came down to earth: so as to deliver the soul from this power. The Lord came to death, descended to hell, commanded death to spew up the souls from hell and return them to Him for restoration to life., "And the evil powers in trembling gave up the imprisoned Adam... A dead body conquered and killed the serpent that dwelt and crawled in the heart. A dead body conquered the living serpent."

The Lord descended once into hell, but He continually descends, in the likeness of this descent, into the "dark depths of each heart," and ploughs it with the wood of the Cross and uproots its tares. The power of satan is crushed, but access to the soul has not been closed to him; there must be a batttle with him, but Christ, the "Helper and Protector," combats together with the combattant.

The Lord came also so as to trace out anew in the human heart the *heavenly image* and restore to the soul the *wings of the spirit,* so as to make us partakers of the Divine nature, "to make of believers in Him a new mind, a new soul, new eyes, a new hearing, a new spiritual tongue, and make of men new bottles, so as to pour into them a new wine: His Spirit."

THE BEGINNING OF REBIRTH. But for this it is necessary that a man first *understand,* then *love,* and strive with his *will.* Everything depends on the will of man: "If one does not approach the Lord of his own will and with all his free will, and will not ask Him with complete faith, he will not receive healing." "And if one is not directed toward Him ceaselessly and does not despise everything else, the Lord will not inscribe in Him His image by means of His light." Thus, "the heart of the struggler is an arena; there the evil spirit battles with the soul, and God and the Angels behold the struggle."

DETERMINATION AND HOPE. Further, St. Macarius teaches that in the soul there must be formed *determination,* so that no matter what might be directed against it, enduring everything in the midst of thousands of temptations, it will say: "Even if I die, I will not forsake Him" (that is, the Lord, for the benefit of sin and the enemy).

"A Christian likewise should have the *hope and joy* of the future Kingdom and deliverance, and say: 'If I am not delivered today, I will be delivered on the morrow.' " (Here a comparison is made with one who plants a vineyard, with a house builder, and a farmer, who await in the future the reward of their labors.) "So also here: If a man will not have before his eyes joy and hope that he will receive deliverance and life, he will be unable to endure sorrows and accept the burden and go on the narrow path."

HUMILITY. Salvation must be accomplished in great *humility.* If one does not have this, "he is given over to satan and is stripped bare of the Grace of God already granted him, and his self-esteem is uncovered, for he is naked and poor." It is a great scandal and danger to feel oneself to be advanced, to have entered a safe harbor — then suddenly the waves will rise again, and a man will see himself again in the midst of the sea, where there are only water and sky and imminent death.

UNCEASINGNESS OF THE BATTLE. THE SNARES OF THE ENEMY. The struggle must be *unceasing* and must never be stopped; otherwise the soul again will fall under the power of satan. This begins when, having lost vigilance, a soul becomes attached to *earthly cares and impressions.* This draws after it the *cutting asunder of the spirit,* and thanks to this, sharpness of sight is dulled and the soul ceases to see its own wounds and secret passions, becomes incautious, and forgets that it must "wage warfare and battle." Satan begins by *instilling good thoughts* and drawing one into "refined and good-seeming" undertakings; and the soul, unnoticed by itself, falls into "the nets of diabolic perdition."

GRADUALNESS OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH. Spiritual life is an organic process, like physical growth or coming to maturity. A man grows gradually, in proportion to his struggle, and he has stages of development. And in the period of growth, at the same time as the action of Grace, sin is also present in him. "And do not think that your whole soul has been illuminated: within it there still remains a great pasture-land of vice, and there is still required great labor and effort, in agreement with the Grace which acts upon the soul."

FULFILLMENT OF ALL THE LORD'S COMMANDMENTS. One must also expend effort in order to acquire all the virtues, not limiting oneself to

some one virtue. Thus, for example, if one is without prayer and forces himself to acquire prayer, so as to have the grace of prayer, but does not force himself to acquire meekness, humility of wisdom, love, and to fulfill the other commandments of the Lord, and does not take care, does not expend labor and effort in order to advance in them: then, to the extent of his free will and in accordance with his petition, sometimes the grace of prayer will be given him in part, but in other respects he will remain the same as he was before. He will not have meekness because he did not labor for it and did not prepare himself to become meek; he will not have humility of wisdom, because he did not ask for it and did not force himself to it; he will not have love for everyone because, while asking for prayer, he did not concern himself over this love and did not exert effort for acquiring it. But soon he will lose this grace of prayer also, because he did not give himself over, with all his free will, into fulfilling also the other commandments of the Lord.

ASCENT TO THE ACQUIREMENT OF THE SPIRIT. Spiritual life begins with the struggle of *faith;* faith passes into *hope.* Then a man can no longer be drawn into this world by anything, and he "is translated and transported into another world and remains in thought in the higher world of Deity." But if one does not give himself over entirely to seeking the *love of Christ* and does not concentrate all his efforts toward this single aim, he cannot acquire the Spirit.

For this one must have SELF-RENUNCIATION. The most important weapon for the battler and struggler is to hate oneself, renounce one's own soul, become angry at it, reproach it, oppose one's habitual desires, contend with thoughts, fight with oneself.

SOBRIETY. One must wage warfare first of all in the *mind.* The goal of the battle is to bar access to evil thoughts not so much by opposition as by placing against them good thoughts and by training oneself in dispassion or indifference to sinful impulses. This is the *dying to fleshly life.* Thoughts still break into the mind, disturb the soul, but do not deceive it, and therefore do not become enrooted. For this is required *effort of will* so as "not to listen to vice and not to take enjoyment of it in one's thoughts." (Compare the later teaching on the stages of the devil's attack by means of thoughts.)

THE LORD'S SEAL OF LOVE. But complete deliverance is accomplished only through becoming strengthened in the good by means of firmness and constancy in struggle, by complete devotion to God and love for one's neighbor, because "one cannot be saved other than through one's neighbor." "For purity of heart consists of this: when seeing a sinner or one who is infirm, to have compassion and mercy toward him."

Such love attracts the good will of God and is converted into a mystical, godlike love, in which the very nature of the soul is transmuted. Then the soul is inflamed with "Divine love for Christ" and is united with Him in a mystical union.

He who is not born of the reigning Spirit is not made a son of God and does not receive "the sign and seal of the Lord," and does not have hope. In the last day the Lord will recognize His own by His seal, and if the soul while still in this world does not receive the holiness of the Spirit and is not dissolved in Grace, he is not fit for the Heavenly Kingdom.

III. Deification

THE DIVINE FIRE. Just like St. Anthony the Great, St. Macarius speaks of the "Divine fire" which illuminates and sanctifies souls according to the degree of their struggle. Christians, like lamps burning with one and the same fire, are inflamed and give light by means of one and the same Divine fire of the Son of God.

"The immaterial and Divine fire illuminates and tests souls. This fire acted on the Apostles when they spoke by means of fiery tongues. This fire shone on Paul with a voice and enlightened his mind, while it darkened his sense of sight; for it was not without the flesh that he saw the power of that light. This fire Moses saw in the bush. This fire in the form of a chariot transported Elijah from the earth... This fire banishes demons, uproots sin. It is the power of resurrection, the actuality of immortality, the enlightenment of holy souls, the confirmation of the noetic powers."

MANIFESTATION OF GOD (Epiphany). The limitless and unapproachable God, in His unutterable goodness and condescension, appears to rational creatures in light and fire in order to enter into communion with them, that is, with Angels and the souls of Saints. God diminishes Himself in His unapproachable glory and, becoming transformed, "makes Himself flesh" in order to join Himself to them and become one spirit with them, and in order that the soul worthy of God might be able to perceive immortal life and become a participant of incorruptible glory. "When He wishes, He is fire; and when He wishes, He is unutterable and unspeakable repose... for everything that He wishes is easy for Him."

SONSHIP AND DEIFICATION (Theosis). Man must strive toward *deification,* must make this his aim. In other words, he must "change his present degraded nature into another, divine nature." And then man becomes a son of God, becomes "greater than himself" and above the stature of the first Adam,

since not only does he return to the original purity, but he also becomes *deified*, although he still remains infinitely far from God and there is not and cannot be anything in common between the nature of man and the nature of God. "And only in His endless, unutterable and unimaginable love and out of compassion does He (the Creator) deign to dwell in this creation, in this rational creature."

THE ACTION OF THE DIVINE FIRE. Grace is gradually enkindled in the soul: at first it dries up and burns natural and evil desires. From this Divine fire the demons melt like wax. Then the soul itself becomes inflamed, and it burns, being penetrated through and through with heavenly fire. The fire is kindled in proportion to the degree of struggle and devotion to and hope in the Lord.

THE GRACE-FILLED CONDITION OF THE PERFECT is diverse. "Sometimes they are made cheerful, as if at a royal banquet, and rejoice with joy and unutterable happiness. Sometimes they are like a bride in divine repose, reposing with her bridegroom. Sometimes, while still in the body, just like the Angels of God they feel in themselves such a wingedness and lightness. And sometimes they are as if in rapture from a beverage, being made joyous and drunk by the Spirit, in the rapture of Divine mysteries. But sometimes they are as if weeping and lamenting over the human race, and, praying for the whole Adam, they pour forth tears and weep, being inflamed with spiritual love for mankind. Sometimes the Spirit kindles them with such joy and love that if it were possible they would contain all men, good and evil, in their hearts. Sometimes in humility of wisdom they so humble themselves before every man that they consider themselves to be the very last and least of all. And sometimes a man becomes as just one among ordinary men."

THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT (Charismata). Through *peace and joy* Grace is revealed in the heart and wisdom in the mind, and hidden mysteries are revealed. And in this spiritual light there is revealed to man the nature of his own soul, and he sees the *soul's image,* just as he sees the sun with his eyes; and this image is Angel-like. Self-knowledge gives birth to *clairvoyance.* The spiritual man knows about everyone, but no one can know or judge about him. And he receives the *authority of guidance.* His gaze penetrates the world above. He becomes a *prophet of heavenly mysteries,* "ascends to heaven, and with undoubting assurance takes enjoyment of the wonders that are there."

The degrees of vision are various: "There is *perception,* there is *vision,* there is *illumination.*" Illumination is above perception. This is the awareness of the certainty of visions. And something else again is *revelation,* when the great mysteries of God are revealed. And something else is *vision,* when

something far away becomes visible to a man. *Contemplations* are something revealed within, in the depths of the heart. And there a certain inward, profound and hidden *light* flashes before the inward eyes.

ASCENT (rapture). And he discerns and sees with these inward eyes his "true Friend, the sweetest and much-desired Bridegroom, the Lord." Many mansions are revealed to him, and he is enriched: "And to the degree that he is enriched, new wonders are shown to him. And the mind is transported in rapture, and the soul is separated from the world and becomes foolish to it by reason of the hidden mysteries." The soul is as it were "dissolved with God." And the Lord clothes the struggler in "life-giving garments of light." And the wind of the Divine Spirit penetrates the whole essence of the soul.

And the Lord receives the soul, "gradually changes it by His own power until He raises it up into *His own image*. And then it is enthroned with Him unto the endless ages."

THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD. Only a few attain such a fullness of rapture, ecstasy, here on earth, and that only for a moment. The fullness of transfiguration will be attained only on the day of resurrection. Then the hidden glory of the Spirit will shine forth in the bodies of the righteous. They will be clothed in the Spirit and will be transported to the heavens, so that the body itself "will reign together with the soul."

The spiritual resurrection of the soul precedes the resurrection of the body: "That heavenly fire of Divinity which Christians receive even now, in this world, within themselves, in the heart, where it acts — this fire, when the body is dissolved, will act also outwardly, and will unite the members anew and perform the resurrection of the dissolved bodies... The heavenly fire will bring forth and renew and resurrect the corrupted bodies." The prefiguration of this resurrection has already been made manifest in the Transfiguration on Mt. Tabor.

The Parable of the Ten Virgins

Twice in the works of St. Macarius is to be found an interpretation of the parable of the ten virgins (Matt. 25:1-13). St. Macarius explains that the "oil of rejoicing" with which the wise virgins provided themselves is the Grace of the Holy Spirit, which every man must strive to acquire while still in this life. St. Seraphim of Sarov unfolds this teaching in detail in his well-known "Conversation" with Motovilov.

Some understand by "oil," good works. But works in themselves have no value. It is the enemy who instructs us to perform good for the sake of good, without paying attention to the Grace which is acquired by them. Only that which is done in the name of Christ has a spiritual value.

And thus, as St. Seraphim teaches: "The oil is not works, but the Grace of the All-holy Spirit of God which is received within our nature through them, transforming it (our nature) from corruption to incorruption... from darkness to light, from the cavern of our nature, where the passions are bound like cattle and wild beasts, into a temple of the Divinity, into a most radiant bride-chamber of eternal rejoicing in Christ our Lord."

This Orthodox teaching is directly contrary to the teaching of Roman Catholicism on "works." St. Seraphim was familiar with the teaching of many Holy Fathers, and in the "Conversation" he quotes in particular St. Anthony the Great and St. Macarius the Great.

A NOTE ON "PSEUDO-MACARIUS" AND THE "MESSALIAN ORIGIN" OF THE SPIRITUAL HOMILIES

The above article by Prof. I. M. Kontzevitch (†1965) was written in the best tradition of Orthodox Patristic scholarship, with the purpose of elucidating the spiritual and theological meaning of a basic Orthodox text. In recent centuries heterodox scholars in the West (and those Orthodox scholars who have fallen under their influence) have shifted the center of interest in Patristic studies to an entirely secondary question, that of comparison of texts, establishment of authorship and "influences," and the like. In itself there is nothing reprehensible in such a study, as long as the meaning of the text itself remains primary, and the individual scholar knows enough to trust the judgment of Orthodox tradition over his own personal opinions and whims, and to place any "new discoveries" he may make into the context of that tradition. Alas, in our own times there are very few Patristic scholars of the maturity of Professor Kontzevitch, who, while being familiar with the science of textual criticism, knew how to subordinate it to the higher science of the *meaning* of Patristic texts.

Occasionally, textual critics do indeed make a discovery which necessitates a revision of some long-standing opinion concerning some text or other; seldom, however, owing to the one-sidedness of their interest, are they able properly to interpret the full significance of their own discoveries, something which can be done only by a true Patristic scholar: one who *lives* in the tradition of the Fathers and therefore can understand the Patristic texts from within, not as an outward academic exercise. In the case of the "textual criticism" of St. Macarius the Great, the "new discoveries" have caused one-sided scholars to come to utterly absurd conclusions which can only be rejected by sound scholarly judgment.

The authorship by St. Macarius of the *Spiritual Homilies* has never been doubted in the East, and even among modern Western scholars it was not questioned until the present century. Some scholars began to find his authorship "dubious" because his contemporaries who wrote of his life (Palladius and Rufinus) do not mention any writings of his, and because there is no known

association of his name with the text of the *Spiritual Homilies* for over a century after his death. However, given the fragmentariness of direct literary evidence from that period; the absence especially among great spiritual figures like St. Macarius of any sense of "publishing" or "copyrighting" a spiritual teaching which he did not "invent" but only received from the Holy Spirit and from other Holy Fathers; the fact that the 5th-century writer Gennadius *does* refer to "an epistle" of St. Macarius, and some manuscripts title the Homilies an "epistle"; and the total lack of any direct proof *against* the traditional ascription — this argument may be seen to have no weight at all.

However, in the second decade of this century a certain Roman Catholic scholar, Dom L. Villecourt, discovered in the *Spiritual Homilies* "traces of Messalianism," a heresy which was condemned in 431 at the Council of Ephesus. This Council listed a number of heretical propositions taken from a Messalian book, the *Asketikon*; this or a similar list has been preserved in the book *On Heresies* by St. John Damascene, and Villecourt discovered that "traces" of all but two of these 18 sentences are to be found in the *Spiritual Homilies,* and in a few cases the wording is even identical. This was sufficient for a number of Western scholars to agree that the authorship of St. Macarius was "out of the question," to begin a long (and to this day fruitless) search for the "real author," who *must* have been a Messalian, and to speculate (on no evidence whatever) on how the work was later "corrected" and made "Orthodox" and then put under the "protection" of the great name of St. Macarius — that is, how a deliberate fraud was perpetrated.

It is significant, however, that these scholars *do not know and do not even enquire into the true spiritual and theological doctrine of the* Spiritual Homilies. They "play" (as it is called in academic parlance) with a few words (18 short sentences out of 300 pages!) without knowing the meaning and context even of those few words, let alone the whole book and the rich spiritual tradition of which it is an integral part. So far does this "learned ignorance" of some scholars go, that a standard Roman Catholic Patrology (Johannes Quasten, *Patrology,* Spectrum Publishers, Utrecht|Antwerp, 1966, vol. III, pp. 162-166) devotes four pages to these "textual" arguments, and *not one word to the doctrine of the book itself.* It is sufficient to repeat blindly "Pseudo-Macarius" in order to be in good repute in such "scholarly" circles.

What is the opinion of sound Orthodox scholarship on the question of the "Messalianism" of the *Spiritual Homilies?* Obviously, the 18 sentences must be understood in the context of the 300 pages of the whole text, and not vice versa. From the account of this heresy by St. John Damascene (*On Heresies,* Book 3, ch. 80), it is clear that the Messalians (also known as the Euchites) were a sect based on "enthusiasm," kin to the ancient Montanists and the contemporary "charismatic movement," demanding of its adherents that they receive the Holy Spirit "sensibly" and that they trust their own prayer more than the Church's Mysteries. Most of these sectarians were to be found in monasteries, and their teaching is that of one group of unbalanced monks, who abounded at that time when "going to the desert" had become the fashion. Their teaching had clearly nothing to do with the sound Orthodox spiritual doctrine of St. Macarius.

To take an example: The second of the condemned propositions of the Messalians is "that satan and the demons have hold of the minds of men, and human nature is capable of communion with the spirits of evil." When we know that according to Messalian belief man is in a state of such absolute slavery to the demons that even baptism does not deliver him from them, and that the adherent of this sect must engage in no labor at all except to pray constantly until he *feels* sin being driven out of him like smoke — then we will certainly agree that this statement is heretical. But here is the corresponding passage in the *Spiritual Homiles* (Homily 27:19; the corresponding phrases are italicized): "Certainly *they are evil spirits, satan and the devils, who have hold of the mind,* and put fetters on the soul. The devil is very wily, and has many conjuring tricks, and loopholes, and all manner of shifts, and keeps hold of the ranges and thoughts of the soul, and will not allow it to pray properly and to draw nigh to God. For *nature itself is capable of fellowship with the devils and spirits of wickedness,* and likewise with Angels and the Holy Spirit. It is the temple of satan, or the temple of the Holy Spirit. Examine your mind, brethren; which are you in fellowship with? Angels, or devils?" This is perfectly Orthodox doctrine, known in the experience of every Orthodox Christian who is laboring for his salvation; it can be found in the New Testament. *Who borrowed from whom?* The Messalian doctrine is clearly a twisted version of the Orthodox doctrine, taken out of context and made to serve a dualistic philosophy.

The same thing is true of the other condemned propositions of the Messalians (save for those that have no equivalent at all in the *Spiritual Homilies*). No sober scholar could possibly find "traces of Messalianism" in the writings of St. Macarius. Indeed, is not the very fact that the Messalian propositions seem to have appeared in written form precisely between the years 390 and 431 (see Quasten, vol. III, p. 164) a convincing evidence that the *Spiritual Homilies* from which they were taken were in circulation very soon after the death of St. Macarius in 390? It is quite impossible for a scholar rightly to understand even the most elementary question of textual comparison *if he cannot properly distinguish between Orthodoxy and heterodoxy,* and if he himself does not hold Orthodox views. The whole history of this academic fashion — the attempt to bind the name of St. Macarius with the heresy of Messalianism — is only another proof of the hopeless one-sidedness of so much of modern scholarship, and indeed the glaring incompetence of heterodox scholars to deal fully and maturely with Orthodox texts.

Academic fashions being what they are, it should be noted that, due to the *latest* "discovery," "the entire hypothesis of the Messalian origin of the homilies has been challenged" (Quasten, III, 164). True Orthodox scholarship need not be disturbed by the ups and downs of such whimsical "research," and Professor Kontzevitch has rightly ignored it completely.

The TYPICON of the Orthodox Church's Divine Services

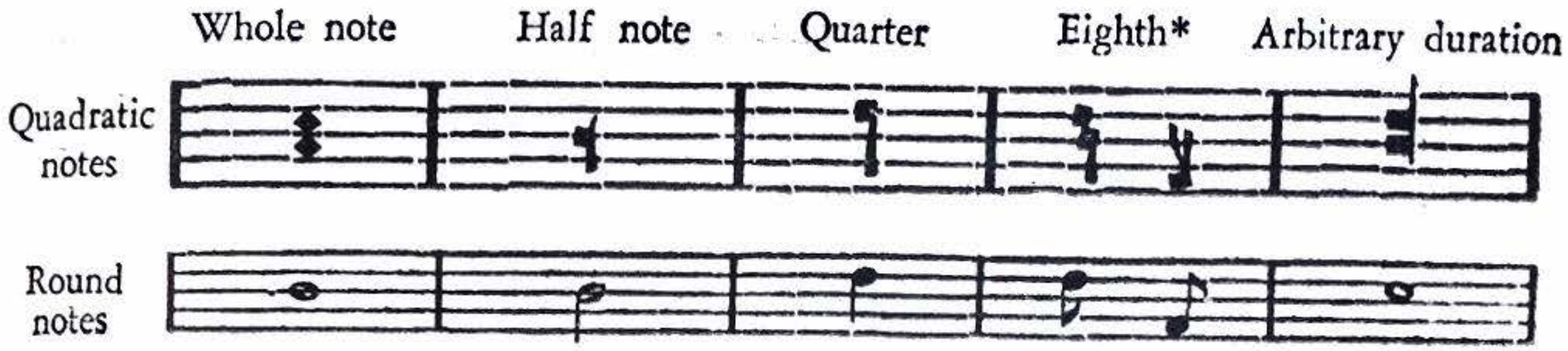
CHAPTER FOUR
THE TRADITIONAL NOTATION OF RUSSIAN CHANT

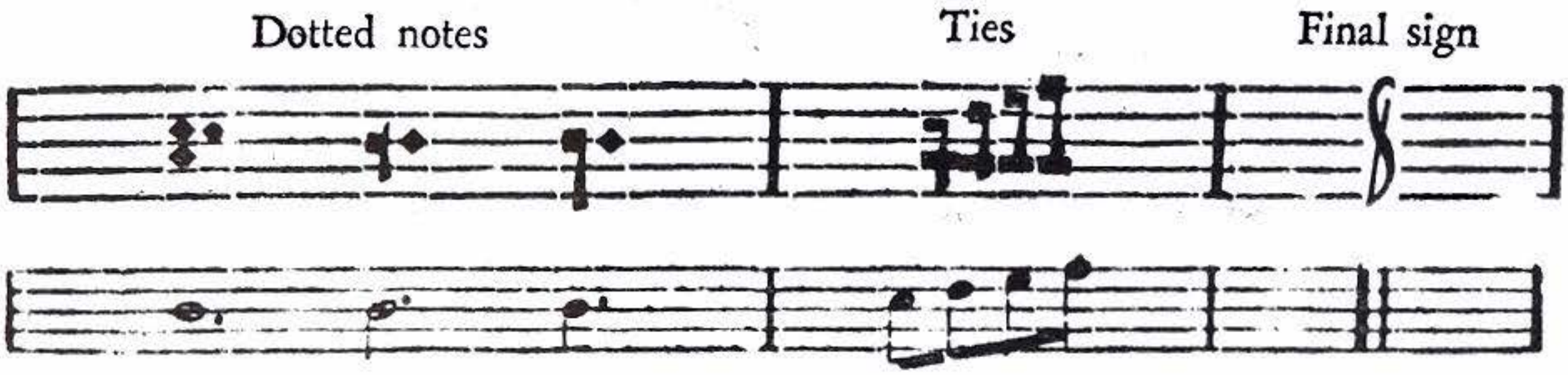
THE EARLIEST NOTATION of Znamenny Chant was by means of the "signs" for which this ancient Chant was named, which were placed over the text of the chant without use of lines. In the 16th century this was replaced by quadratic notes placed on a scale of five lines, and this notation was used right up to the Russian Revolution in the books of notes published by the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church. In the middle of the 18th century the round (Italian) notes of the European musical notation began to be used, and they spread together with the four-part harmony which is most conveniently expressed by this notation.

Those who were working before the Revolution for the wider use of the traditional Russian chant preferred to use the quadratic system of notation, for one thing because it is the older system and was the one still officially in use for traditional chant, and again, because they considered it fitting to print the melodies of the Divine services in a special "ecclesiastical notation," as it were, distinct from the ordinary notation of secular music (as well as of Europeanized church music). And there is yet another reason why the quadratic notation is appropriate even today: it is much simpler to follow for one who has not had much musical training. Most of those in the Orthodox parishes of today who might wish to sing the traditional chant are musical "amateurs" for whom keys and signatures are only confusing, and sharps and flats invariably cause a stumble. The quadratic notation, which has no sharps or flats (save for one flat which is rarely used) or any other musical signs, and has only one key, may be followed easily by anyone who can merely sing the major scale.

In the explanations that are given below, no attempt has been made to go into the musical theory underlying the different forms of notation; it is intended only to give the simplest possible practical explanation that will enable the reader to read and sing by the quadratic notes.

The difference between quadratic and round notes is so small that anyone who knows one can learn the other with a few minutes of study.



* The position of eighth notes is determined by the upper quadrate.

All melodies in the quadratic notation are written in one "key": the key of C (with no sharps or flats). The key "signature" is always the same, and only indicates that middle C is always placed on the middle line (as in the alto clef of the round notation). Thus, middle C in the quadratic clef, as compared with the treble clef of the round notation, is indicated as follows:

However, to read the quadratic notation there is no need to begin with any note of absolute pitch, such as middle C. The middle line of the quadratic clef is simply equal to "do" in the major scale ("do, re, mi, fa, sol, la, ti, do"), and thus "do" may be middle C or any other note that is convenient for the singers. In order to sing by the quadratic notes, one simply begins the melody on whichever note of the scale is indicated first in the notation (on "do" if the first note of the melody is on the middle line, etc.), and then merely goes up or down the major scale according to the sequence of the notes that follow.

The chief difference, however, between the quadratic and round notations lies in the question of *tempo*: quadratic notation has no indication whatever of tempo, no "bars" or "measures," and indeed the notes themselves are not even precise in their time-value. This is an indication of a whole different philosophy of music and musical notation, which is well set forth by the foremost contemporary scholar of Russian ecclesiastical music, I. Gardner:*

"A mistake often made in singing according to the quadratic notation is 'metronomic' singing. That is, the length of notes is held precisely, with a strictly-measured beat. This is understandable for those who are accustomed to the usual round (Italian) notation with its symmetrical rhythm.

"However, one should not forget that the quadratic notation is used to transcribe those melodies which were originally written by signs without lines. The neumatic system (without lines) of transcribing sound was developed especially *for the singing of words*, while the system with lines (whether quadratic or round) is a system adapted to instrumental music. Therefore, the system with lines is incapable of giving precisely all the peculiarities in performance which the system without lines can give.

"Here is what has been written by the founder of the systematic study of Russian liturgical music, D. V. Razumovsky (1886): 'Although the quadratic notes are here explained by the ordinary round notes, this explanation is not precise, but only *approximate*. The round notes signify an *unchanging* duration of sound... However, in the practice of the singing of the Divine services the quadratic notes have never signified, nor do they signify now, such a *strictly-measured* duration. Of the quadratic notes one can only say that the whole note signifies a *greater*, the quarter note a *lesser*, and the half note a *medium* duration of sound. The duration of sound in church singing depends on *the meaning of the words* in the text and on their metrical emphasis. If we adopt a *strict measure* of quadratic notes to the text of sacred hymns, we will immediately notice that many words under an equally-measured performance lose their metrical emphasis, their power and meaning.'

"In other words, the comparative duration of any identical notes (for example, half notes) is not always exactly the same: on one word it may be exactly equal to a half note, but in another case it can be some fraction of time either shorter or longer than the metronomically-measured half note. These variations depend on the meaning of the text in conjunction with the melody. It is these, together with the dynamic shadings, that create the *expressiveness* of singing. If one may say of secular music that 'rhythm is the soul of music,' then with regard to church singing it would be correct to say: 'the word is the soul of church singing.' And the expressiveness of this singing is lost if one performs the quadratic notes metronomically exactly, according to strict tempo, equally, and without the fine dynamic shadings which come from the meaning of the text. Such singing would be soulless and monotonous."

So primary are the words in church singing, and so approximate is the musical notation, that whenever a number of consecutive words are to be sung at the same pitch,

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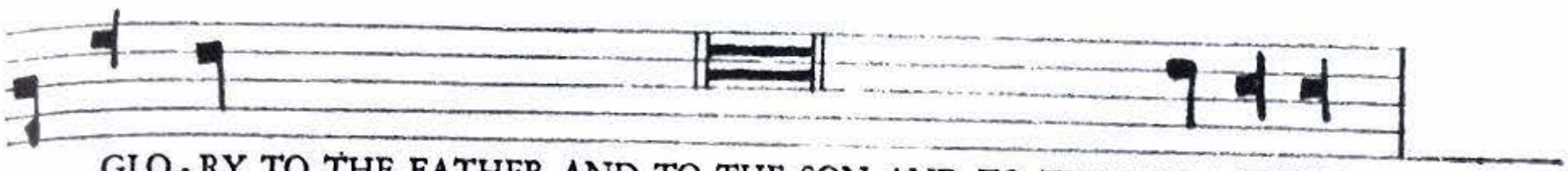
* "On the Synodal Divine Service Books for Singing," in *Orthodox Way* for 1971, Jordanville, N.Y., pp. 110-111; in Russian.

the quadratic notation does not provide a note for each syllable, but only a sign of "arbitrary duration," leaving it to the singers to give time-value to the separate syllables in accordance with the emphasis of the words. Thus, in the following example:



GLO - RY TO THE FATHER AND TO THE SON AND TO THE HOLY SPIRIT. ALLELUIA.

the only function of the half notes used above the syllables "GLO-ry" and "SPIR-it" is to indicate that these syllables are stressed, while those expressed by quarter notes are unstressed; and the singer himself must distinguish the words which are placed under the sign of "arbitrary duration" accordingly as they are stressed or unstressed. (The syllables "FATH-er" and "SON" would be held a little longer than the other, relatively unstressed syllables, but not quite as long as the syllables "GLOR-" at the beginning and "SPIR-" at the end, which receive the maximum stress in the phrase.)

Another thing to note, as Prof. Gardner points out in the same article, is that the whole note of the quadratic system is actually equal (approximately) to the *half note* of the Italian system; the chants in quadratic notation are performed at double the expected tempo, thus obliterating the illusion that some people have of the "heaviness" of the ancient chant.

The Western influences to which Russian church music was subjected especially in the 18th and 19th centuries led to the fashion and taste for largely Europeanized music which prevail even today in the Russian Church. However, the Church Authority in Russia always fought against this fashion; in the 19th century, Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow in particular pointed out to the Holy Synod the innovations in church hymnody to be found in the printed Anthologies of Lvov, the celebrated choir master. These popular Collections of "revised" chants, arranged in four-part harmony and transcribed in the Italian notes, were *allowed* by the Holy Synod, as Prof. Gardner points out, but they were never *prescribed.* The only chants actually *prescribed* by the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church for use in the Divine services were the ancient chants, transcribed in the quadratic notation; and the books containing these chants, published with the blessing of the Synod from 1772 onward, are the only books of notes which have the authority of actual *Divine-service books,* which have their place right beside the Menaion and other service books containing the texts, without notes, of Divine services. The *Psalmists' Companion,* mentioned in the last chapter, is a compilation of the most important of the authentic ancient chants from the old Synodal books of notes.

Prof. Gardner well notes (on p. 116 of his article): "In our days of the disappearance of church musical culture, the Synodal editions in quadratic notation are again acquiring a great significance." Without making these standard books of Russian traditional chant an object of pharisaical over-zealousness (which can easily happen in our unbalanced times), we may nevertheless look to them for inspiration and guidance, as to a model of true church hymnody handed down from ancient times.

Next Issue: Feast Days and "Ordinary" Days.

The Life and Ascetic Labor of Our Father, Elder Paisius, Archimandrite of the Holy Moldavian Monasteries of Niamets and Sekoul. Part Nine

ELDER PAISIUS' LETTERS FROM DRAGOMIRNA

4. To the Priest Demetrius*

In this letter to his one-time fellow student, Blessed Paisius movingly sets forth the monastic ideal and practice which inspired him to become in modern times an imitator of the great monastic Fathers of antiquity.

To the imitator of the deeds of Abraham, the fervent doer of the commandments of God. my dearest friend, the reverend Demetrius the priest:

Rejoice in the Lord!

In the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ (for it is fitting, as St. John of the Ladder has said, to begin with God when addressing a God-pleaser), I have the intention to write to you, my very dear friend, a true slave of Christ, calling His Divine Grace to the aid of my mind's infirmity — for without Him, according to His unlying words, we can do nothing — at least a little, in a few brief words, concerning the common life and thrice-blessed obedience, which is the root and foundation of the common life and, what is more, of all monasticism. I believe that this my writing to you will be above all most pleasant to your all-sacred soul which I love, for even until now the God-given fire of love for monastic life is unquenched in you and is preserved in a God-pleasing way.

May you know, then, my beloved friend, that the Holy Spirit through the Holy Fathers has ordained and established the whole monastic life in three kinds: the anchoretic solitary existence, the dwelling together with one or two others, and the common life. The anchoretic life is this: when one dwells alone in the desert far from men, and trusts for his soul, for food and clothing and other bodily needs, in God alone. having Him alone for helper and conso-

* Slavonic text in the Optina edition of the Life of Elder Paisius, pp. 220-236.

BLESSED PAISIUS

DRAGOMIRNA MONASTERY

lation in his battles and in his infirmities of soul and body, being a foreigner and stranger to every consolation of this world for the sake of the love of God.

The life with one or two others may be defined thus: an elder experienced in the Holy Scriptures dwells in silence, and has one disciple or two who dwell with him in obedience and submission of soul and body.

The common life begins, according to St. Basil the Great, in imitation of the life of the Lord with His disciples, with twelve brethren and not fewer; and in so far as the Lord prospers it, it may grow to be a gathering of many men composed of one or many tongues. It may be defined as follows: all the brethren who are gathered together in common in the Name of Christ should have one soul, one heart, one thought, and one will: to serve Christ by the doing of His Divine commandments, and to bear each other's burdens, submitting to each other in the love of God, having for this one's own father and instructor, the superior of the monastery, who is skilled in the understanding of the Divine Scripture, who instructs in word and deed, and in everything they submit to him as to the Lord Himself with complete and perfect cutting off

and mortification of their own will and understanding. That is, in no way do they resist his commandments and teaching, if these are in agreement with the commandments of God and the teaching of the Fathers, but with all fervor they strive to fulfill all that he commands in the fear of God and with faith and love. All things that serve bodily necessities are held in common. Not in the least thing is one to have his own property, movable or immovable.

In all these three kinds of monasticism, inasmuch as they have been established by the Holy Spirit, there have been many Holy Fathers who have perfectly pleased God and have shone forth like the sun in spiritual gifts.

Concerning all these three kinds and orders of monasticism the Holy Fathers bring forth testimony from the Divine Scripture.

Concerning the first kind, that is, the solitary life: whether one judges the height of such a life, which is fitting only for those who are perfect and passionless and for those who have been deliberately called to such a life miraculously, by God's Providence; or whether one examines the infirmity of us beginners and passionate ones, and the many and various deceptions of the enemy that follow on the life of self-will — we have the testimony of Scripture: *Woe to him that is alone* (Eccl. 4:10); if he falls into despondency, or sleep, or sloth, or despair, there is none among men to raise him up.

The life together with one or two others is praised by the Holy Fathers, who call it a most praiseworthy Angelic dwelling and the royai way, citing from Scripture the testimony of the Lord: *Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them* (Matt. 18:20).

And concerning the common life, there is the testimony of the Holy Scripture: *Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity* (Ps. 132:1).

These being the three kinds of monastic life, St. John of the Ladder counsels those leaving the world and entering monasticism to incline neither to the right nor to the left, but to go on the royal way, that is: not to go into the desert, inasmuch as the solitary desert life requires Angelic strength, and a beginner, and especially one who is vanquished by the passions of the soul, that is to say, anger, rage, vainglory, envy, opinion, and the rest, should not presume to behold even a trace of such a desert life, lest he lose his mind. Neither should he enter upon the common life, not because it is not profitable (for what is more profitable than such a life which St. Basil the Great has praised, saying that he does not have sufficient power of words to praise the height and magnificence of such a life?), but because it demands great patience.

Rather, the Saint advises one to go on the royal way: that is, to have one's dwelling with one or two others, inasmuch as such a life is more appro-

priate for many, as not demanding such great patience as is demanded by the common life, and being a little easier. To submit in everything to one's father alone, or to the brother who lives with him also, is not so marvellous and demands less patience.

In the common life together with many brethren, one must submit not only to one's father, but also to all the brethren, even the very last one, and endure from them vexation, dishonor, and mockery, and every kind of temptation; and one must consider oneself dust and ashes under the feet of everyone, and serve everyone like a bought slave with humility of wisdom and the fear of God; and one must endure with understanding the constant poverty in the common life, and the want of bodily necessities of food and clothing. It is impossible for the mind of man to understand or to speak or to say in words what a work this is of great and extreme and longsuffering patience, and what rewards in the future blessedness he receives from the setter of our labor, Christ God, who endures unto the end in such a God-pleasing common life.

And therefore, according to the judgment of the Holy Fathers, these two kinds of monastic life, that is, the dwelling with one or two others, and the common life, are presented for the choice of those leaving the world for monasticism; they may will to renounce the world and serve Christ in whichever way they choose: whether in the first, as being more consoling, as has been said; or in the second, the passion-bearing common life, so that they may receive, according to the word of St. John of the Ladder, a double crown from God in the day of the just giving of rewards according to deeds.

But to select the third kind of monasticism, that of the desert, the Holy Fathers neither command nor advise for beginners who leave the world, for this reason: the desert life is like the Crucifixion of Christ on the Cross, while the common life is like the Passion of Christ which He endured before the Cross for the sake of our salvation.

Just as Christ, our Saviour and the Setter of the struggle of our salvation, Who in everything has presented Himself, by His most pure life in the world, as an image and depiction for us as to how to please Him, did not endure first the Crucifixion on the Cross and then His most pure Passion, but first the Passion and then the Cross; in the same way, in imitation of the Lord, the Holy Fathers command one who desires to please God in monasticism to begin his life in the common life, which is comparable to the Passion of Christ, and to suffer in it together with Christ in a complete cutting off of one's own will and understanding: to endure with great and unutterable joy dishonor, mockery, reproach, and every form of temptation, until he should be manifest as

irreproachable in humility. That is to say, let him endure all these temptations with great and unutterable joy, and let him desire them every hour like some heavenly beverage, and let him consider those who tempt him as his great benefactors and the intercessors of his salvation, considering himself to be under the feet of everyone like dust and ashes, reckoning with his whole soul that he is unworthy of dwelling together with them or of looking anyone in the face.

And from such a prolonged and profound humility, which is acquired in the common life by the queen of virtues, thrice-blessed obedience, one becomes inflamed in his blessed soul with the fire of the unutterable love of God, and he no longer, according to St. Arsenius, can be both with God and with men; such a one, with the advice of the fathers, may go away into the desert, which is comparable to Christ's Crucifixion on the Cross, inasmuch as he has already completely mortified himself to this world and has been co-crucified with Christ.

Such a skilled and true warrior of Christ, who has first trained himself with a multitude of other warriors of Christ in waging battle artfully with spiritual weapons against his invisible enemies, when he goes out to single combat receives God's help in achieving a glorious victory over the enemies; and God crowns such a one with His unutterable Divine gifts, since he is one who perfectly pleases Him and is a sufferer who has labored lawfully. For such a one the desert serves to increase the Divine love in him, for he is entirely vouchsafed to be in God, and God in him.

For thus has it been established and ordained by the Holy Spirit through the Holy Fathers: if anyone, having left the world for monasticism and disdained this law of the Holy Spirit, and instead of giving himself over in community life into holy and blessed obedience according to the word and meaning of the Scripture, by which means he might acquire true humility by the grace of Christ and be delivered from his passions, above all those of the soul (being passionate and infirm in soul and unskilled in spiritual struggling), out of high-minded fervor should begin to run to the desert and choose for himself a silent and solitary life, desiring instead of imitating the Passion of Christ in community life, immediately to ascend the Cross of Christ prematurely by going away to the desert — on such a one God's wrath comes for his high-mindedness. And since he is an unskilled warrior, not having learned in community life the skill of mental warfare, and further, not even knowing how to hold a spiritual weapon in his hands, but has still dared to separate himself from the skilled warriors in order to fight in single combat and to fight alone against his enemies the devils — such a one, instead of winning, is conquered, by God's allowance because of his high-mindedness, and falls before his enemies, and soon he is devoured by them.

It is for the mighty and the perfect, say the Fathers, to wage combat alone against the demons and take up the sword, which is the word of God, against them. But if a high-minded one dares to do such a thing and goes to the desert prematurely, in place of wheat he will reap tares, and in place of salvation he will acquire perdition. Why is this? Because such a one is a disdainer and a destroyer of the God-given order. This order, as was said before, was ordained for us by Christ our God through His most faultless and pure life in the flesh. Instead of suffering with Christ in the common life, such a one dares in his pride to ascend His Cross, having chosen for himself the desert before the community life. Such a one is not a desert-dweller, but a self-willed one, and the life of such a one is not the desert or the solitary silent life, but rather self-will. And upon such a self-willed life there usually follows no good, but only the deception of the devil. From such a self-willed and disorderly life and habitation a great multitude of monks, both in ancient and recent times, have perished, being deceived by the devil and taking leave of their senses, and have ended their own lives by various frightful deaths, from which deception may Christ our Saviour deliver us all by His Grace.

But what can I say or what shall I utter concerning the earthly heaven, the common life, and of the tree of life planted in it by God, blessed obedience? When the infirm and beginners hasten to it, not daring prematurely to fight alone against their enemies, and when they taste of its immortal fruit, by an extreme cutting off of their will and understanding, like passion-bearers, they avoid death and every deception of the devil, those things that follow the self-willed.

The defense and protection of such a life is the All-Holy Spirit, and such a life is a secure and untroubled harbor for all who wish to be delivered from the agitation of this vain world. It is a ship well captained by the Holy Spirit, conducting those who enter it and submit undoubtingly to this good captainship through the salty sea of this life without harm to the harbor of the Kingdom of Heaven, without fear of the mental inundation of passions. It is a common hospital and safe treatment for all who are afflicted with the passions of soul and body and who truly wish to be healed of these. It is the lawful school of mental warfare against the mental enemy for the warriors of Christ who wish to have a most glorious and soul-saving victory over this enemy; and the invincible weapon against him is the All-Holy and Venerable Spirit Himself.

The common life and holy obedience within it were established for man by Christ our Saviour in His life on earth. He offered an example of the most perfect pleasing of God by living in common with His holy Apostles and Disciples in submission to all His Divine commandments. Even before this He

planted the root and foundation of the common life, Divine obedience, among the Angels in heaven, and among men in Paradise, as the chief virtue of all the virtues and the one most loved by Him. And when it was destroyed by the envy of the devil and by our infirmity, then by His extreme and unutterable love of mankind and mercy He Himself renewed and restored it in Himself, by being obedient to His Father even unto death; His obedience having healed our disobedience, He opened to everyone who rightly believes in Him and obeys His commandments the doors of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Following this example of Christ, eight thousand Christians lived the common life in the earliest Church, having nothing of their own, but everything in common; and for the sake of this way of life they were vouchsafed to acquire a single heart and soul.

The ancient monastic Fathers throughout the world in Lavras and monasteries, having received the written role handed down by the lips of Christ, St. Basil the Great, lived by this cœnobitic life and shone forth brighter than the sun. For there is no other single kind of life which so causes a man to advance than the common life lived with understanding in blessed obedience. Delivering one in a short time from all the passions of soul and body because of the humility which is born from blessed obedience, it conducts one to the prototypal way of life where a man may be in truth in the image and likeness of God just as he was created in the beginning; it makes the gift of God received in Divine Baptism to shine forth in a man above all other spiritual gifts of which the true novice may be vouchsafed to be a partaker through his genuine humility, for the sake of God's Grace; and one may feel this mentally many times with his own spiritual sense.

Such a cœnobitic life of all the brethren gathered in the Name of Christ binds them in such love that even if they may be of various nations and countries, still they are all one body, members one of another, having all in common a single head, Christ; all burning with love for God and for one's Father in God and for one another; all having, with a single soul and mind, this one intent: fervently to keep and perform the commandments of God, exhorting one another to this, submitting to each other with this idea in mind, bearing one another's burdens, being one another's masters and one another's slaves. And because of such a true spiritual love, with oneness of mind, they are the imitators of the life of the Lord and the Apostles and the Angels, submitting in everything with faith and love to their father and instructor in Christ as to God Himself, confessing to him all the secrets of their heart, in no way concealing anything at all from him, and receiving with assurance from him every word and commandment as from the mouth of God. Any will or

understanding of their own which contradicts their father they spit upon, curse, and put far from themselves like a dirty garment, fleeing from it as from a diabolical deception, trembling as before the fiery gehenna, and ceaselessly entreating God that they might be delivered from such a burden by His grace, and that they might cling to their father as a child to his mother and as sheep to their shepherd, and follow him in everything, and like an implement to its fashioner or cattle to their master, striving thus to submit to their father in everything in spite of any judgment of theirs which might contradict him. This, that is, Divine obedience, is the root and foundation of the common life and of the whole of monasticism; for obedience is as bound and joined to the common life as the soul is to the body, and one cannot exist without the other.

Behold the short ladder to heaven which has only one step, the cutting off of one's will; having stepped upon it, a novice quickly ascends to heaven. And obedience is a ready ascent to God; one who travels straight and unwaveringly by it to the end of his life is vouchsafed to become a son of God by Grace, an inheritor of God, and a co-inheritor with Christ of His Heavenly Kingdom. For the common life is heaven, and obedience is the holy heaven of heavens. Wherefore, if one falls away from obedience, he is cast away from God and from heaven, as the Holy God-bearing Fathers have decreed, says the great Gregory the Sinaite.

In ancient times the great God-bearing Fathers were the instructors of such a common life and all-blessed obedience; and because of the purity of their own souls and their perfect pleasing of God in the commandments, they were vouchsafed to be the dwelling of the Holy Spirit, and being illuminated like the sun by Him in spiritual gifts, they came to perfect dispassion and to complete love of God, being guided by the Holy Spirit. And thus also by word and deed and the example of their God-pleasing life they showed the true path of salvation for their God-gathered flock, guiding it to the careful keeping of God's commandments. Therefore their disciples looked upon their holy instructors as upon a living pillar and a light-giving sun, and they were instructed and enlightened themselves in all virtues by the light of their teaching and good deeds; and so they came to please God perfectly, and an uncounted and numberless multitude of them have been saved.

But in the present cruel times, which are worthy of much weeping and lamentation, so few have such instructors become that if any zealots among the monks should desire to please God by means of such a cœnobitic life, their teacher and instructor must be God Himself and the divine writings of those Holy Fathers, the instructors of the common life, which have been preserved by God's Providence even up to now. And if these zealots pay careful heed to these writings, as if it were to those Fathers themselves, by reading them with

the fear of God and understanding, and with God's help, they may be in part imitators of their God-pleasing life, being guided and helped to understand by their own father who has gathered them in the Name of Christ, or else has been unanimously chosen by them, as long as he instructs his spiritual children not from himself, but from the Holy Scripture and from this same teaching of the Holy Fathers.

In ancient times many of the Holy Fathers instructed their disciples from the enlightenment of God's Grace without being learned. But at the present time the Holy Fathers command us by no means to instruct the brethren from our own wisdom, but to instruct them from the Holy Scripture and from the teaching of the holy monastic Fathers who knew the mystery and the power of the Holy Scripture by the Holy Spirit, and who by His Grace foresaw that in these last times sound teaching and genuine instructors for monks would almost disappear. These Holy Fathers, being inspired by the same Holy Spirit, wrote their holy and soul-profiting teaching for our eternal benefit and guidance, and in order to lead us and confirm us in the way of salvation. And if, at the present time, the instructors of monks and their disciples themselves shall hold to this teaching with humility of wisdom and fear of God, they themselves will not go astray in their salvation, nor will those who obey them.

And now, having presented to your love of God my brief and deficient word about the three orders and kinds of monastic life and their characteristics, and the benefit which comes from them, knowing your extreme love and loyal friendship for me in God, I wish to make known something of myself and of our poor life, at least briefly.

Translators' note: Here there follow several pages which have already been included in the narrative above, concerning the beginning of Blessed Paisius' monastic life (*Section* 11; *see* THE ORTHODOX WORD, 1972, *no.* 6, *pp.* 251-2) *and his life on Mount Athos* (*Sections* 35-37; *see* THE ORTHODOX WORD, 1973, *no.* 1, *pp.* 33-35). *Then he continues*:

Wherefore, placing our hope in God Who is everywhere present and fills all things and is blessed in every place of His dominion, we moved all together from the Holy Mountain to the Orthodox land of Moldovlachia, where by the grace of Christ this our life has been established, even more securely than on the Holy Mountain, in the Monastery of Dragomirna which has been given us by the pious Ruler and the Most Reverend Metropolitan, until such time as the Lord desires, Who has granted us a rather free hand for such a life in this land. And there have already gathered in this community brethren, desiring to labor unto the Lord in holy obedience with oneness of soul, numbering about a hundred who are monks, in addition to novices, having all in common this one good intent: to labor unto God in fervent keeping of His Divine commandments.

First of all, no one has possessions of his own, even to the slightest thing: for this is the first rule of the common life, according to St. Basil the Great, and in our community it is carefully kept, and to such an extent that it cannot even enter the mind of any of the brethren to desire to acquire anything in the common life for himself, knowing that this was the path of Judas the betrayer. For anyone who is accepted to dwell in our community places before my feet and the brethren's his possessions, if he should happen to have any, and his things, even to the very least one, and thus he gives them over to the Lord, and he likewise gives himself, soul and body, into holy obedience even unto death; otherwise it is in no way possible to accept anyone into our community.

Secondly, the brethren force themselves to have neither their own will nor understanding, but to keep carefully wise obedience. For this is the second rule of the common life, its root and foundation, as has been said already many times: and this rule by God's Grace, in so far as is possible to our infirm human nature in these times, is also carefully kept in our community. Nor is it possible for anyone to be accepted into our community unless he comes with the intent to give himself over body and soul, and with all his free will, into holy and blessed obedience which is testified of in Holy Scripture, so that henceforth he no longer does his own will or keeps to his own understanding or guides himself, but he is guided and shepherded by the teaching of our holy monastic Fathers, which is the guidance and instruction and direction of our life according to God unto salvation, and which I dare to offer to everyone in common as well as individually with my sinful lips, unto the condemnation of my own wretched soul in the day of Judgment: for I speak and offer to the brethren soul-profiting counsel without performing a single good deed myself.

Such, then, is the foundation which our life has, that is, non-acquirement and obedience; and all the other rules of the common life, of which this is not the time to write to you in detail, are kept in our community, by the Grace of Christ, in so far as it is possible, and the brethren force themselves to acquire for each other a true and unhypocritical love of God. For loving the Lord above all, and having regarded all the beauties and enjoyments of this world to be dirt, they have left them and taken up their Cross and followed their Lord. Likewise, they force themselves to bear each other's burdens, to have a single heart and soul, moving each other to good deeds, striving to surpass one another in love and faith toward me, unworthy one, as children of God; so that I, seeing them struggling in this way, rejoice in soul and glorify God with tears because the Lord has vouchsafed me to see such slaves of His

and have my dwelling with them and be consoled to see them face to face. Beholding the brethren like Angels of God, forcing themselves to holy obedience, I think myself unworthy to follow their footsteps, seeing myself deprived of such Grace of God, that is, holy obedience.

And even if not everyone in our community is in the same degree, for this is not possible: still, some of the brethren, who are the largest number, have mortified to the end their own will and understanding, submitting in everything to me and the brethren and offering to the brethren, as to the Lord Himself, obedience in the fear of God and in much humility, enduring dishonor, mockery, reproach, and every form of temptation with such joy that it would seem that they have been vouchsafed a certain great Grace of God. They ever desire this insatiably, always and ceaselessly reproaching themselves before God in the secret place of their hearts, and considering themselves to be beneath everyone and the least of all.

Others there are, again not a small number, who fall and then get up, sin and then repent, enduring reproach and temptation, even if with difficulty, but still forcing themselves with all their soul to overtake the first ones, and for this praying to God fervently and with tears.

Yet others there are, not many in number, who are weak and infirm like children, being unable as yet to take solid food, that is, to endure reproaches and temptations, needing still to be brought up on the milk of mercy, love of mankind, and condescension to their infirmities, until they shall come into the spiritual stature of patience, filling up their lack solely by a good will and constant self-reproach. Many times over and beyond their strength they force themselves, with blood, to endure dishonor and to leave off their own will; that is, they pour out before God great labor over this, like blood, and they entreat God with tears that He might help them. And such ones, even if they are infirm, nevertheless are considered before God to be those who take the Kingdom of Heaven by violence.

All such ones, even if not all to the same degree, as was said, force themselves to keep the commandments of God and the Holy Fathers, being bound to each other by the indissoluble bond of the love of God, and enduring for the love of God and their own salvation the constant poverty in bodily necessities with greatness of soul and constant thanksgiving to God, placing their hope in God alone both for their salvation and for provision of bodily needs in their condition of life.

Having gathered together and set forth, God's Grace helping me, this account which you have much desired, as I think, of the three forms of monas-

tic life, as well as of our very poor and humble community which stands from the common life of the days of the Holy Fathers as far as the earth stands from the heaven, but is as much as is possible in our most pitiable times,— I have offered it to you through this epistle. Concerning myself, I may say that, finding myself by God's mercies still in this life, even if in bodily infirmity, I have ceaseless grief and pain of soul at the thought of with what face I shall appear before the Terrible Judge at His Terrible Judgment, where there is no respect of persons, and of what word I will give for so many souls of the brethren who have given themselves over to me in obedience, inasmuch as I cannot answer even for my own wretched soul alone, seeing in everything my weakness of soul and my infirmity, and I cannot present myself as an example to the brethren in a single good deed, as the responsibility of such a life demands. I have undoubting hope for my salvation only, after God and the Mother of God, in the prayers of the brethren who live with me, even if I am unworthy. And I do not despair that the unutterable and unattainable mercy of God will be poured out even on my sinful soul; but if not, and if for my evil deeds I shall be rightly condemned by God's justice to eternal torment, then blessed be God: for I am worthy of this for my negligence over His Divine commandments. Only I constantly entreat His compassion for this: that by His mercy, for the little labor I have had or do have for this common gathering and life in His Most Holy Name, He might at least vouchsafe me this mercy of His, that I might be able, just as the rich man saw Lazarus in the Bosom of Abraham, to behold my spiritual children, true slaves and sufferers of Christ, in His Heavenly Kingdom, taking enjoyment of the Divine beholding of His Face, together with the Angels and Saints who have pleased Him in obedience, for the sake of their brief suffering in obedience. And this would suffice for me in place of any reward; but still, for the sake of their holy prayers, I the wretched one hope also to be saved: for which I entreat your holiness to entreat God for me, remaining in all humility your true friend, desiring your salvation.

Sincerely wishing the much-desired sight of your face, your friend forever, I am

The unworthy Superior of the Brotherhood
gathered in the Name of Christ,
Hieromonk Paisius

May 16, 1766
Cœnobitic Moldovlachian Monastery of Dragomirna
This letter is sent with Fathers Gabriel and Spiridon

Next Issue: The Moldavian Monastery of Sekoul.

Abbess Sophia of Kiev

CATACOMB ABBESS OF THE PROTECTION CONVENT

CONDENSED EXCERPTS FROM THE FORTHCOMING BOOK
BY HELENE KONTZEVITCH

OF INESTIMABLE SPIRITUAL VALUE is the fearless stand for Christ's Truth by the New Martyrs of Russia. Especially by their manful act of testifying where the Truth was to be found at a time when many did not see this — the Josephite confessors of 1927 and thereafter historically preserved the savor of Orthodoxy for generations to follow. Now that almost half a century has passed, history has shown that these "stubborn rebels," the followers of Metropolitan Joseph of Petrograd, were absolutely correct, and their significance now shines forth as equal to that of the great Confessors of Orthodoxy in ancient times.

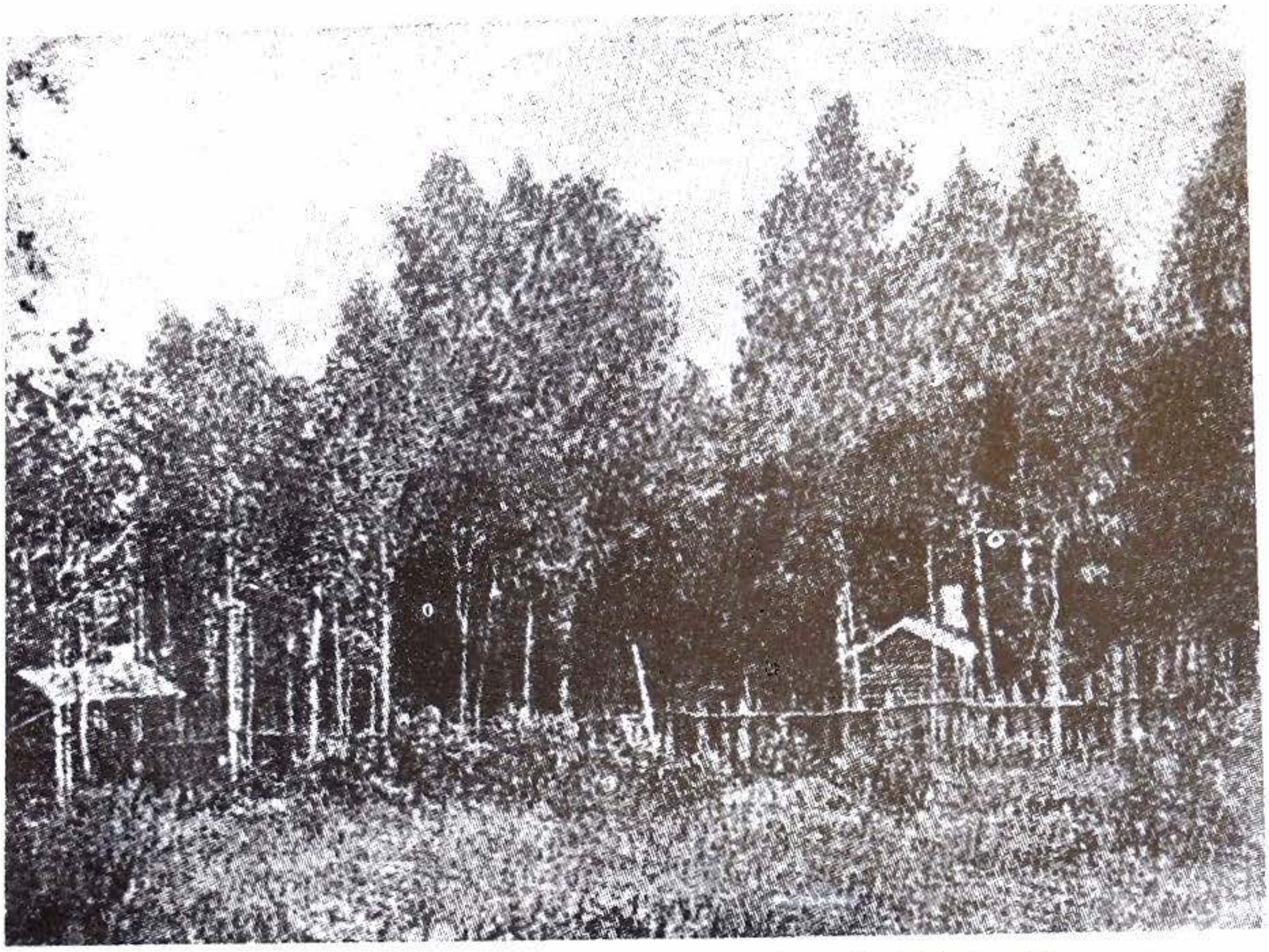
One of such Josephites was Abbess Sophia, whose boldness as a confessor was a direct result of her high spirituality and genuine Orthodox worldview. She reached spiritual maturity at the time of Russia's pinnacle of holiness, when the Russian land was preparing to offer itself as a pure and ripe sacrifice to God at the bloody hands of the God-hating Communists.

The future Abbess, Sophia Grineva, was born in 1873 in a wealthy landowner's family. The Tula and Kaluga region, sanctified by Optina Monastery and its remarkable influence on all phases of religious life, was the countryside where the young Sophia received her upbringing and spiritual formation. When her father died, the children stayed for a while in the convent of her native town of Belev, which was under the direct spiritual direction of the Optina Elders, and whose abbess was their family's former governess. They often visited Optina Monastery, where once Elder Anatole prophetically called the 12-year-old Sonia an "abbess." But it was discovered that she had a very good voice, and so she was sent to the musical conservatory to study for a career in opera. This, however, did not satisfy the heart of God's chosen one, which was striving for higher things, and her soul longed for monastic struggle.

Not far from the Grinev estate lived a wealthy landowner, Znamensky, whose daughter Anna, having just completed her higher education, abandoned all thought of an upper-class career and, out of religious zeal, preferred to become a village school teacher. Being aflame with monastic striving, she

ABBESS SOPHIA IN HER LATER YEARS

would give spiritual lectures with the singing of akathists, ending late at night. These were attended by more than 400 people. Anna and Sophia became close friends. Late one winter evening, going through the deserted woods to Anna's lecture, Sophia encountered a wolf, and her death seemed certain, since these beasts, who plagued this territory, were not only cattle-killers, but had recently even killed an armed officer. Here she made a vow to become a nun if she remained alive. She made the sign of the Cross over the wolf, and at once he ran away into the woods. Soon Sophia caught a severe cold and lost her voice, thus ending her worldly pursuits. By that time Anna had asked and received her share of land from her father's inheritance, and together with ten other young women she settled in a remote and deserted wooded area and began to lead a severe monastic life, with the blessing of several holy men: St. John of Kronstadt, Elder Ambrose of Optina, Elder Barnabas of the Gethsemene Skete,



The original huts of the desert-dwellers of Holy Trinity Convent, where the young Sophia laid her monastic beginning.

Elder Gerasimus of Kaluga
(†June 16, 1898)
Founder of St. Nicholas Convent

His disciple, Fr. Gerasimus
Founder of St. Sergius Skete
Friend of Abbess Sophia

and others. The girls built huts for their dwelling out of branches and boards, slept on the earthern floor with a rock for a pillow, ate dry bread, and only on feast days had some warm weak barley soup. Soon the news spread of this genuine skete-life, and Sophia joined Anna. Anna with her spiritual daughters felled trees, chopped firewood, dug a well, and built a beautiful church, dedicated to the Holy Trinity, where they conducted the whole daily cycle of Divine services. Life was hard but very rewarding. The community flourished, with over 600 sisters, an orphanage, an old-age home, a large vegetable garden and orchard, a brick factory, and metochia in Moscow and Petersburg. But Anna, overwhelmed by her success, suffered a grave spiritual catastrophe: she was lured into spiritism and left the convent. Dissension struck the convent, and some sisters left. Sophia went to a holy Elder, Gerasimus of Kaluga, who had just opened the St. Nicholas Convent for his spiritual daughters.

Father Gerasimus, himself a spiritual son of Elder Ambrose of Optina, had a spiritual son, Misha, who later received the name of his Elder, Gerasimus. He later became as clairvoyant as his Elder, and founded a St. Sergius Skete, where he gave spiritual healing to many suffering ones. Between him and Sophia there developed a spiritual friendship which lasted for life; later they would send spiritually crippled people to each other for healing. Following his example, Sophia left the convent with another sister and went to found an independent community. On the bank of the beautiful Oka River there was an abandoned church of St. John the Almsgiver.There the young sisters settled in order to continue their "narrow path" of poverty, daily church services, and labor. Their life inspired followers, and a new community, dedicated to the Icon of the Most Holy Theotokos "Comfort and Consolation," grew rapidly and soon became a spring of spiritual enlightenment also for the workers of a local factory, who were mostly ex-convicts.

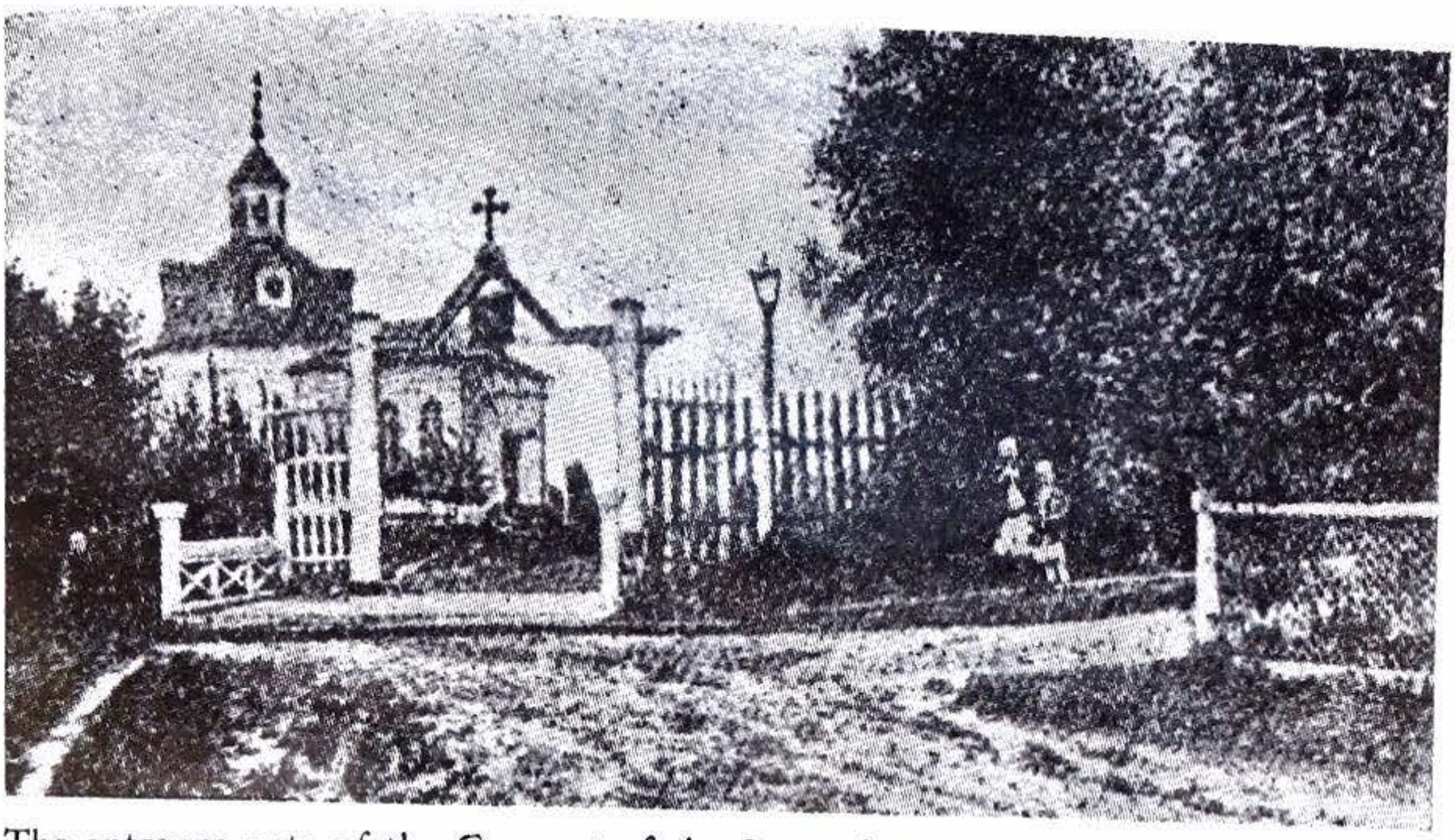
When the church authorities noticed the gifts of Abbess Sophia, they made her head of one of the largest convents in Russia, that of the Protection of the Mother of God in Kiev, a post which she accepted in hope of being able to help financially her own convent, which was in need of funds. The city convent in Kiev was so large that it possessed a large city hospital, in addition to other charitable institutions. But Mother Sophia was as guileness and simple as before. This is where the Revolution found her.

Being a true offspring of the Optina Elders, with whom she was in constant contact, she soberly discerned the true nature of the Soviet Revolution and knew what to expect from it. Thus, when the assault of the "Living Church" struck, her convent was one of the first to give a blow back, although she herself had already been arrested. A new calendarist bishop was forced into the convent by GPU agents to serve Liturgy. When the women who at-

THE PROTECTION CONVENT IN KIEV AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY

tended it came up to kiss the Cross at the end, one after another they spit on the bishop's hand that held the Cross, and thus an end was put to "renovation" in the Protection Convent, and the bishop learned his lesson and repented. Hearing about this, Bishop Damascene (see below) exclaimed with bitterness: "If it were not for women, who else would defend the Church? Let them at least defend it however they can!"

Abbess Sophia was arrested and released several times in the period before Metropolitan Sergius' "Declaration" of betrayal to the Church in 1927. Mother Sophia and her clergy, led by the young Father Dimitry Ivanov, were the first ones in Kiev who openly rejected it. Unfortunately, they were supported by few of the other clergy, while most of the local bishops were silent, in effect accepting the "Declaration." The Convent was confused and divided because of this, and Abbess Sophia thought it wiser to leave the Convent with Father Dimitry and twenty sisters of like mind. A wealthy lady, Mrs. Barbenko, offered her summer home in the Kiev suburb of Irpen as a refuge for the confessors; at this time a miraculous spring had been discovered nearby. Living there, of course, was not easy, since an intensified persecution was being directed against all Josephites. In the house where the nuns lived there was a hall adorned with paintings. At night they were taken down and replaced by icons, and all night long fervent prayer was offered in special vigils. In the morning the paintings were replaced, and no outsiders could know that this was a cata-



The entrance gate of the Convent of the Icon of the Mother of God, "Comfort and Consolation." At left, inside: the main church of St. John the Almsgiver. At right: some children from the Convent's orphanage.

ABBESS SOPHIA (first from left in white) with sisters during her spiritual talk in the Convent refectory, about 1913

THE IRPEN GROUP
OF CATACOMB
FAITHFUL

Bishop Damascene
is at center, seated,
with Mother Sophia
at his left

FR. DIMITRY IVANOV
with friends and nuns
of the Protection
Convent in 1919

comb church, which served as a spiritual center for the true Orthodox Christians of the whole Kiev area.

There exists an anti-Sergianist document from this circle, a letter written from a person close to Abbess Sophia to a friend abroad in 1933. To get around the Soviet censor, the church situation is thinly disguised behind a discussion of "doctors." The person who received it immediately understood, of course, that "Dr. Sergiev" is Metropolitan Sergius, the "old men Petrov and Kirillov" are the elder hierarchs, Metropolitans Peter and Cyril, who refused to accept the "Declaration"; the "clinics and drugstores" are churches; and "treatment" is Holy Communion and the other Holy Mysteries. Here is the document:

"None of our people have any contact with the doctors of Sergiev, and we do not go to his clinics for treatment. He has acted completely illegally, since the old man, Dr. Petrov, only assigned him as his replacement for current business when he had to go away, but Sergiev, without a consultation of all the doctors, took over the administration, which he directs in all matters. The old men Petrov and Kirillov do not recognize this administration, and both of them are in persecutions and sorrows. My husband was very upset with the activities of Dr. Sergiev, because all the zealots of true homeopathy [Orthodoxy] are deprived of the possibility of treatment, since all the drug stores are in the hands of those who have taken over everything. It is difficult to explain to you, but if you know everything, it is *unacceptable.* I will tell you one thing: I was in Chernigov the whole time without a doctor and travelled to Kiev [to Mother Sophia] when it was necessary, that is, once or twice a year. Here also the children have not gone for treatment."

The leading anti-Sergianist hierarch in the Kiev area was the bright figure of the Bishop-Confessor Damascene (Cedrick), who was spiritually very close to Abbess Sophia. He wrote flaming appeals showing the ruinousness of Metropolitan Sergius' policy in every aspect. His stirring appeals were secretly copied and re-copied by Orthodox zealots, and some of them reached the free world; where they were distributed and recently printed by his secretary.* His deep concern was for the future of true, unadulterated Orthodoxy in Russia, a concern shared by his friend, Metropolitan Cyril,† and, of course, by Abbess Sophia. The only answer to the church situation, he thought, was to prepare for the end of the world and cease thinking about a church "organization." He was often arrested, released for a short time, and then exiled again and again. one such visit, when Mother Sophia was also free from prison for a time, he tonsured her in the Great Schema. There exists a rare photograph of him with

* Elena Lope, *Bishop-Confessors* (in Russian), San Francisco, 1971.
† For his Life, see *The Orthodox Word,* March-April, 1973.

Mother Sophia and her flock, taken probably in 1934, between his last two arrests; he is seated at center, with Mother Sophia seated at his left.

Abbess Sophia's priest, Father Dimitry Ivanov, was a true confessor. He suffered severely for his heroic stand for Orthodoxy and his flaming sermons. He was in prison for a long time, then was released and arrested a second time, being severely beaten. Finally, after being tortured almost to death, he was sent in exile to the far north, to the city of Archangelsk. His wife managed to accompany him, but he was too weak even to stay on his feet. They came to Archangelsk, not knowing a soul in the city. Father Dimitry fell down in the middle of the street and just lay there, unable to move. A Jewish doctor who was passing by took him to his home and cared for him; and in his arms Father Dimitry gave up his soul to God. His wife later told about this. All the members of the Irpen community were likewise arrested one day and exiled to an island in the Kamchatka area in the Far East, where they were placed in a collective farm that raised reindeer. Mrs. Babenko, who became a nun, sent word from there, but then was never heard of again. Thus the Irpen haven of true Orthodoxy came to an end.

Abbess Sophia was arrested before the rest of the community, and thus she was not sent with the other sisters to the Far East, but was thrown from one prison to another, mostly in European Russia. Her sisters here and there managed to keep watch over her, until finally, as a result of the inhuman prison conditions, she contracted asthma and other serious ailments, and she was released to die. But even while in prison she was not harmless for the God-hating Soviets. Judging from an earlier encounter she had with one convinced atheist, she must have challenged the beliefs and prejudices of materialists in the prisons, shattering to pieces their philosophical inconsistencies and thus bringing their souls to God. Once, before the Revolution, a lady who knew Abbess Sophia's deeply-rooted understanding of the Orthodox world view, implored her to influence her son, who was a convinced atheist. This man, exceedingly brilliant and talented, was making an enviable career for himself in engineering, and would not yield to anyone's persuasion. Mother Sophia talked to him about religion, but he resisted her words, although she did manage to talk him into going to Sarov Monastery; she herself also went there at this time. The duel between the holy nun and the atheist was not an easy one, but by her holy prayers some miracle took place, which shook the engineer to the depths. He not only became a believer, but was truly reborn spiritually. His former life disgusted rim completely, and he could not endure to continue it. He left his job, abandoned everything he had, put on simple peasants' clothing, and set out on foot for Solovki Monastery. The former atheist became a pilgrim with the Prayer of Jesus on his lips.

ORTHODOX BIBLIOGRAPHY

MONASTERIES AND CHURCHES OF HOLY RUSSIA (ARCHITECTURE OF RUSSIA FROM OLD TO MODERN, Vol. 1). Russian Orthodox Youth Committee of the Russian Church Outside of Russia, P.O. Box 370, Baldwin Place, New York, 10505. 296 pp., large format (8x12 inches), 348 illustrations.

THE TONE of the present volume is well set by the inspiring prefatory sermon on the New Martyrs of Russia by Archbishop John Maximovitch. The book is unique among "art books" on Russia, in that it is not a work of soulless "academic" scholarship, but a living testimony of the spirit that produced the art and architecture illustrated therein. Both text and photographs are the work of young Russians abroad who have recently travelled to the Soviet Union and are "eyewitnesses to the sufferings of our Fatherland." The large photographs (276 in color) give an accurate picture of the present appearance of the churches in the parts of Russia open to tourists. The bilingual text, in Russian and English, gives an historical background for the churches illustrated and duly notes which of them are "active" (open for services) and which are museums or simply closed. A number of black and white photographs of pre-

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The last morning in the much-suffering life of Abbess Sophia arrived when she was amidst her spiritual daughters, on a collective farm near Serpukhov which was a catacomb convent. She was in a state of absolute exhaustion. not having partaken of any food for several days. After morning prayers, when her room had been put in order, Mother Sophia asked to be left alone, and then began to read her favorite book, the Gospel, — when the sisters heard her coughing and gasping for air. The agony lasted for three hours, but she was fully conscious and her eyes were clear. Then she turned her gaze to an icon, closed her eyes for the last time, and departed to the Lord. That was on March 22 (April 4, NS), 1941.

Before my mind's eye one picture will remain forever: Abbess Sophia is sitting on a sofa; on the floor, like a Turk, sits the young Father Dimitry (Ivanov). They are happy, they joke and laugh. She is talking about the guilelessness of children, her orphans... But in spite of such a happy mood, they well know that the "Communist" tomorrow will not spare them, and that they must be ready for everything. But their faith in God does not allow them to fall into despair, and that is why they are so joyful and happy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Amen.

Revolutionary churches contrast sharply with color photographs of their present state — whether ruins, as with the churches of the Kiev Caves Monastery, or some even sadder spectacles, such as the immense swimming pool that was recently built on the site of the Church of Christ the Saviour in Moscow, which was destroyed over forty years ago by the Soviets.

The longest sections of the book are devoted to the churches of Moscow and Kiev, with shorter sections on Vladimir-Suzdal, Novgorod, Pskov, Kizhi, and St. Petersburg. A final section gives black and white photographs of a few of the Moscow churches which have been destroyed or disfigured.

One is only too glad to recommend such a book, which in its way is a reflection in the free Russian Diaspora of the spirit of open confession today in enslaved Soviet Russia.

St. Sergius' Lavra — from Churches and Monasteries of Holy Russia

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